



City of Biggs

Agenda Item Staff Report for the Regular City Council Meeting: February 27, 2012 6:00PM

DATE: February 7, 2012

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Pete Carr, City Administrator

SUBJECT: Introduction of Draft Policy for Use of Volunteers (Discussion)

City administrator will introduce the concept of a policy for use of unpaid labor in accomplishment of city tasks and objectives. Council may or may not wish to pursue establishment of this policy. Staff seeks direction.

Background

Civic engagement has always included opportunities for citizens to accomplish good for their community by donating time and talent. Volunteers tend to increase their enjoyment of the community and save the city's scarce resources which can then be applied in other areas.

With constrained government budgets, many local governments are looking for enhanced ways to engage citizens in volunteer work. The paradigm and definition of "city volunteer" may change as we consider acceptable and desirable ways to include volunteers in meeting the city's mission and objectives.

Traditional roles have included helping at the library, animal shelter, law enforcement and fire support, and physical clean-up. Biggs currently enjoys the benefit of volunteers for:

- Staffing police and fire volunteer teams
- BCAV and Hometown committees
- Graphic layout and design for bi-monthly newsletters
- Public works crew augmentation when county program has resources
- Small engine repair

Additional volunteer opportunities could be created in many areas including;

- Customer service, office admin, filing, typing, updating documents
- Grant searching, grant writing
- Historic document collection and archiving
- Parks maintenance, especially playground and landscaping
- System technology maintenance and upgrades

- On-call graffiti removal
- Library maintenance and upgrades
- [your idea here]

Best practices suggest expanding the role for volunteers and implementing work-like supervision, including:

- Identification and prioritization of volunteer openings
- Posting job descriptions for volunteer opportunities
- Advertising opportunities
- Interviewing and selecting as you would with employees
- Livescan background checks for anyone who might come into contact with children or other vulnerable populations.
- Orientation training, supervision and periodic evaluation
- Recognition

Challenges and concerns may include:

- Liability issues (may need additional special risk policy)
- Employee displacement
- Admin burden of coordinating and supervising volunteers
- Policy maker involvement in daily operations
- Confidentiality issues

Experience in other municipalities shows that each of these concerns can be effectively addressed if approached appropriately.

There are federal and state grant opportunities available to cities signed onto the City of Service.org program. Private companies and foundations like AARP also provide stipends for volunteer program coordinators. Training is available for coordinators.

Recommendation

Direct staff.

Fiscal Impact:

Depends on direction given.